

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION UNDER 37 CFR § 1.111

Serial Number: 09/467,994

Filing Date: December 20, 1999

Title: *SYSTEM AND METHOD OF DISTRIBUTING AND RETURNING PRODUCTS*

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This following listing of the claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended; Third Time) A product distribution and return system, comprising:

a vending machine configured to dispense media products;

a product dispensed from [a] the vending machine in one location, the product being one of said media products;

a return mailer dispensed with the product, wherein the return mailer is also a product case, the product returnable in the return mailer to a return center, the return center being in another location; and

a label comprising an address of the return center and having an amount of postage sufficient to mail the product to the return center;

a database with information associated with the product,

wherein said label is configured for being attached to the return mailer for returning the product to the return center or alternatively for being attached to a second return mailer if the product is not returned to the return center;

wherein a product rental fee is defined in a set of product rental terms, further wherein the product rental fee includes fees for non-compliance with the product rental terms;

wherein the return center determines compliance or non-compliance with the product rental terms, further wherein an additional charge is posted to a consumer account or a future credit to a consumer account is canceled for non-compliance with the product rental terms; [and]

wherein the product rental terms include terms related to a specified return date and product condition; and

wherein the database contains information specifying at least four of the product rental terms selected from the group consisting of a transaction identifier, product title, product dispense date, specified return date, product condition, product rental fee and product purchase price.

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2. (Currently Amended; First Time) The system of claim 1 further comprising a controller containing [a] the database with information on the product, the controller connected to the vending machine and to the return center with transmission links.
3. (Currently Amended; First Time) The system of claim 1 wherein the ~~[product is a]~~ media product selected from the group consisting of DVDs, CDs, videotapes, software media and audio tapes.
4. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the product is rented using a transaction card.
5. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the vending machine is located in a location selected from the groups consisting of an airport, a railroad station, a bus station, a subway, a store and a hotel.
6. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the product is obtained in a first location, used in a second location and deposited in a collection box in a third location.
7. (Original) The system of claim 2 further comprising a service agent facility having an automated service agent, the automated service agent having means for accessing the database.
8. (Original) The system of claim 7 further comprising instructions issued by the controller to the return center and to the service agent facility, the instructions providing information on inventory management.
9. (Original) The system of claim 1 further comprising a transaction identifier on the return mailer.
10. (Original) The system of claim 9 wherein the transaction identifier is a scanable code.
11. (Original) The system of claim 10 wherein the return mailer has pre-paid postage and is pre-addressed to the return center.

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Claim 12 (Cancelled).

13. (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the product is not returned to the return center.

Claims 14-16 (Cancelled).

17. (Currently Amended; Second Time) The system of claim 1 wherein the database contains information comprising a transaction identifier, product title, product dispense date, specified return date, product condition, product rental fee and product purchase price.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17 wherein the return center determines compliance with the specified return date by noting the actual return date and comparing the actual return date with the specified return date in the database.

19. (Currently Amended; Second Time) A method of doing business, comprising:

providing a vending machine configured to dispense media products;

providing a media product for rent [a] at the vending machine in one location[,];

dispensing the media product from the vending machine, the media product being dispensed with a return mailer, wherein the return mailer is configured as a product case;

requesting return of the media product in the return mailer to a return center located in a location other than said one location within a period of time, the return mailer depositable with a third-party delivery service;

storing information about the media product rental terms in a database; and

providing a label comprising an address of the return center and having an amount of postage sufficient for the third-party delivery service to return the product to the return center;

wherein said label is configured for being attached to the return mailer upon returning the product to the return center or alternatively for being attached to another return mailer if the product is not returned to the return center; and

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wherein the database contains at least four of the media product rental terms selected from the group consisting of a transaction identifier, product title, rental date, specified return date, product condition, product rental fee and product purchase price.

20. (Currently Amended; First Time) The method of claim 19 wherein a unique code identifies the media product, rental location and the rental date.

21. (Currently Amended; First Time) The method of claim 20 [~~method~~] further comprising storing information about the media product, rental location and rental date [~~on a~~] in the database

22. (Original) The method of claim 21 further comprising issuing credit or canceling additional charges depending on product condition and product return date.

Claims 23-27 (Cancelled).

28. (Currently Amended; Second Time) The method of claim 20, wherein the return center activity comprises:

opening the return mailer;

inspecting the product inside the return mailer to determine if the product is in good condition;

comparing information in the database with the product inside the return mailer; and

issuing a credit for a difference between [a] the product rental [~~price~~] fee and [a] the product purchase price or canceling a future charge when the product is returned in good condition and on time.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28 wherein a pro-rated credit is issued when the product is returned late or in less than good condition.

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30. (Currently Amended; Third Time) An apparatus for dispensing media products, comprising:

means for selecting a particular product;

means for dispensing the particular product together with a first return mailer to a customer;

means for transporting the particular product from the customer back to a return center located apart from the means for dispensing;

means for identifying the particular product;

means for recording a transaction date in a database; and

a label comprising an address of the return center and having an amount of postage sufficient to mail the particular product to the return center;

wherein said label is configured for being attached to the first return mailer for returning the particular product to the return center or alternatively for being attached to a second return mailer if the particular product is not returned to the return center; [and]

wherein said particular product is a media product and said means for transporting comprises the first return mailer dispensed at said means for dispensing; and

wherein the database contains information specifying at least four product rental terms selected from the group consisting of a transaction identifier, product title, product dispense date, specified return date, product condition, product rental fee and product purchase price.

31. (Original) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the means for selecting and depositing a particular product is a vending machine.

32. (Original) The apparatus of claim 31 wherein the means for identifying the product and rental date is a unique code, the unique code enterable in the database.

Claims 33-34 (Cancelled).